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THE SEVEN QUESTS OF MAN

(THE QUEST FOR SERENITY)

Beloved Companion:

Moo-lu Ah-kin said that wisdom usually comes with age, but when age is far advanced, wisdom often recedes. The mark of the wise one is the gift of serenity. And serenity is like unto Nirvana, that state which the modern world calls Heaven, but which in the ancient days was called Ca-an by The Maya.

A "Tun" is a Mayan year, a Katun means a cycle of 20 years in the Mayan language. Three Katuns and ten Tuns equal an average lifetime and should bring serenity, which is a preparation for life eternal in Ca-an or the state of eternal bliss, or Heaven.

In the previous monograph released to you, we have considered the human quest for the Infinite. Another worldwide and agelong quest of the human race is for serenity. Usually when we meet a great soul we find that it is one that has found serenity. This awakens both our wonder and our envy.

Let us not assume that these people have found the path to a serene mind short or easy. We do not know what their struggles have been, how much they have had to overcome, and how many times they have failed. We may assume, however, that many of them were as far from the goal when they started as we are now, and that they have had as many difficulties in attaining what they have as we would have in trying to do the same thing. Serenity is not something some are born with and some are born without. It is something anyone can attain if he will make the necessary effort and have the necessary persistence and patience.

Serenity is not necessarily a product of peace and quiet. More often it is cultivated in the midst of storm and stress. It is not a characteristic of weak hearts but of strong ones, and strong hearts are most often forged on the hot anvils of human action and even in the midst of confusion.

There is an old story about a prize competition among attempts to paint a

picture of PEACE. One very well executed canvas depicted a placid lake. There was not a ripple on the water, and not a leaf on the overhanging branches suggested motion, for there was no breeze. Everywhere was complete calm. The judges did not give the award to this picture. They said it was not a picture of peace, but one of stagnation.

Another painting showed a body of water lashed by the fury of a storm. The trees growing on the edge of a rugged cliff rising from the water were bent and twisted under the force of the wild wind, as the wild waves dashed up the sides of the cliff as if trying to meet them. But in the rocky face of the cliff was a little niche in which rested a bird, calm, secure, and unafraid. The judges gave this picture the award, for they said it was truly a picture of peace.

That is the way it is. Serenity is NOT stagnation, but the finding of a place of security IN THE MIDST of whatever storms may blow. The bird in the picture had found that place. It is possible for every human being to find one like it. Paul found it in the Mamertine Prison. Joan of Arc found it at the stake. Lincoln and Lee alike found it in the confusion, strife, and danger of a great fraternal conflict. Others, humble and nameless, have found it in the midst of drab and trying everyday affairs and even among the ashes of earthly hopes and plans.

To many of us, security means only financial security. That has its importance, but it is not the kind of security the bird had found in the cliff-side and that so many great souls of earth have used to hold them steady. Financial security is desirable, but it is easily and quickly won or lost, and its power to satisfy is very limited. GETTING THINGS ONLY MAKES ONE WANT MORE THINGS, and directly he finds himself on a treadmill arriving nowhere. Too, many of the things the heart requires for serenity CANNOT be bought. THEY HAVE TO BE BUILT, OR ACQUIRED BY LABOR.

The serenity we seek is not material. It is not something to be possessed. It is an adjustment. It is the condition one has when he has mastered himself and adjusted his life to his fellow beings, his Creator, the universe, and his own best interests. It is then like a machine that has been well oiled, put in good condition, and with all the frictions removed is functioning smoothly and effectively. A machine full of friction and chatter mars even a peaceful scene, and one that is rightly conditioned and operated remains so even in a place of noise and confusion. Of course no machine, however good its condition, can function unless it is in right adjustment to its source of power. A life, unrelated to the Divine, is like a machine unconnected with a motor.

When we attain this condition we have serenity whether the rest of the world does or not. To say we are wrought up, jumpy, and fearful because of the conditions around us is no excuse. To enable us to walk steadily through the conditions of a world and an age like this is just what serenity is for. To fail to seek it is to disregard the antidote. If one lacks the balance and poise called "serenity" it is because of INTERNAL conditions and not external ones. It is because he has failed properly to integrate and relate his life.

Serenity is another name for peace of mind, and peace of mind is something vastly more than mere unconcern about things and conditions. It is something countless people are wishing for, but do not know how to go about finding. The

purpose of this lesson is to try to point out some of the paths that lead in its direction.

One of them is the mastery of desire. Like material security, desire has its place, but its place is not one of domination over the heart, the will, and the mind. It is for you to say whether your desires shall be restricted to what is good, what you have a right to, and the right and reasonable measure in which it is to be possessed.

The Epicureans were seekers of pleasure, and the Stoics largely disregarded pleasure. Yet the Stoics undoubtedly found more satisfaction in living than the Epicureans did; and the same is still true.

THE PLEASURE SEEKER FINDS NO SERENITY BECAUSE HE IS BEING LED ABOUT BY HIS DESIRES, AND HIS DESIRES ARE NEVER SATISFIED.

Two of the great Stoics were Diogenes and Socrates. When Alexander the Great visited Diogenes he found him in his bathtub. The world conqueror asked the old man if he could do anything for him, and no doubt would have gladly given him what many would have loved to have. All Diogenes said was, "Yes, you can stand out my sunshine." He had all he wanted but the sunlight.

When Socrates returned from a visit to the fair he was asked what he had seen that impressed him most.

"The number of things I can get along without." The wise man replied.

These two men had their desires, but what they desired they had found. They had sought for values that do not make men envious and covetous, and they had nothing to ask of life but the privilege of seeking truth and living by it. They were among the few who were free, because truth alone can make one free. They had not banished desire, but they had mastered it.

Until one is free from the habit of wanting things and ever more things, he will never find serenity. When he learns to want only the true and abiding values he finds that he can acquire them in spite of anything, so he is freed from the fret and fever of life's demanding rivalries.

The Oriental philosophies and religions stress this matter of the mastery of desire very heavily. Some of them teach that the highest good one can attain is entire freedom from desire. That may seem a little extreme, but if you will observe people about you it will probably be apparent that good things often come to those who have ceased to strive for them even more freely than to those who fight to snatch them from others and possess them for themselves. That was what the Galilean Teacher meant in what He had to say about the way God clothed the lilies that toiled not nor spun, and the way He watched over the sparrows who knew nothing of the laws of Economics.

The only serene person is the secure one, and the only secure person is the one who keeps as nearly in the right path as he knows how. The storms of life can beat in such a way as to wreck every person save one, the one who is right. Whatever else they do to him, they cannot destroy his faith, weaken his confidence, or change his purpose.

Who is the person who is right? There is no need to quibble about that as many do. The law of right is perfectly simple and plain. One is right if he lives by the truth, and there is no other way to be right. Jesus of Nazareth began His public teaching with a discourse we call the sermon on the mount. It sets forth the chief laws of life, prosperity, success, happiness, and goodness. At the close of the address He clinches what He has said in a most effective fashion. He says that one who hears the word of truth and does not do it, is like a man who built his house on the sand, and the storms destroyed it. The man who hears the truth and does it is like one who built his house on a rock, and the winds and floods beat against it in vain. That man could be serene, for he was secure.

Who is the person who debates, and struggles, and gets angry, and resorts to violence of language and action? It is the person who is not sure of himself. He is afraid the other person may be right, and he tries to make up in violent emphasis what he lacks in rightness of position. The person who knows he is right can smile in the face of any opposition because he knows the strength of right will protect him. He is confident, unafraid, and cheerful, because he knows he can afford to be.

If you are in the right adjustment to things nothing can defeat or harm you. If not, no matter what you do to make yourself secure you will ultimately go down in defeat. Rulers, leaders, and unknown people alike have demonstrated that again and again.

A very helpful thing to do in the search for serenity is to learn the habit of objective and impersonal thinking. In other words, keep your inner life within and leave the external world outside. Do not associate yourself with what does not concern you. Take an interest in the world life going on around you, sympathize and help where you can, but do not let it get under your skin.

Remember that all the water in the ocean will not sink your boat as long as you keep the water on the outside. Neither will all the wrong and injustice in the world sink you if you do not let it into your mind and heart. Brooding over a sorrow does not cure it and brooding over wrong does not correct it. It only makes the condition worse and unfits you for doing anything constructive about it. Be concerned about other people individually and collectively, but do not try to live their lives for them. To live your own is enough of a task to keep you busy.

The people who stew and fret over the problems of mankind are not the ones who do most to solve them. Worry does not right wrongs, but sooner or later most wrongs somehow get righted. The greatest contribution you can make to the serenity of the race is to attain serenity yourself and live it consistently before all these people who are tossing about on the billows of their own clashing ambitions and desires. An ounce of demonstration is worth a ton of worry anytime. Serenity does not worry. It knows more helpful things to do.

Think much on great things. This will give your spirit amplitude and cultivate a sense of expanse and freedom. Ask the fuming, fretting people you meet what is disturbing them and more often than not they will mention trivial matters. Many people are actually fretting their lives away over things that are scarcely worth a passing thought. Many supposed wrongs will be solved. Many others will work out of themselves. Many others are really not wrongs at all. Whether wrong

or right, why center your life on small matters? The writer knew a man who fretted himself into criminal insanity ending in a murder, and it all started with worrying for fear he might lose his hair. He never did lose it, and he had so much that it wouldn't have mattered if he had lost some of it.

If at any time you offered the crowd around you a penny for its thoughts, and if the offer were accepted, what do you think you would get? The people on the cars, on the street, going in and out of stores and business buildings - what do you suppose they are thinking about? Well, some of them, but not enough, are thinking about things of real importance, while too many are concerned with trivia. This latter class never know much about serenity, because they never have in their minds anything with enough weight to steady them.

A small life is never serene, and one's life is as large as the thoughts with which he lives. Our thoughts, and dreams, and aspirations set moulds into which our lives grow and by which they are shaped. Two people may be the same height, yet the life of one may tower while that of the other gropes. What has this to do with serenity? Much, because it determines the measure of confidence and poise.

The person whose mind has been made small by small thinking takes unimportant things much too seriously and seldom knows anything about the really important things at all. The one whose mind has been made spacious by thinking great thoughts about great things pays no attention to the unimportant things. He is not disturbed by which way a pebble rolls, because his attention is fixed on the stars. One whose life is concerned with great things and great truths is hard to unsettle. His course is charted and the little storms do not matter, for he knows they will not keep him from reaching port.

The topmost achievement along this line is to gear your life to eternity. After that, you can no longer be impatient, for the mills of God grind slowly. You need no longer be in a hurry, for you have eternity before you. Your peace of mind will no longer depend on the working out of details, for your attention will be fixed on the sure and steady shaping of the eternal purpose.

We read how Jesus of Nazareth went to His crucifixion with no sign of fear or spirit of defeat, and that He met death with calmness and confidence. We are told how Stephen's face shone as though it had been the face of an angel while he was being stoned to death. The whole history of martyrdom is full of such instances. How could these men meet their agonies in such a way? They had found serenity. They were concerned with things in comparison with which facing death was unimportant.

Jesus could be calm because He knew He was not losing His battle. He had lived and worked for things the executioners could not hinder, and His soul was steady because He knew He had accomplished what He had set out to do. The same would be found true of countless others who have died for great causes. What happens in our human experience today or tomorrow matters little, but whether we have played well our parts in the shaping of the divine purpose matters very much.

The eternal truths and values go on to the fulfillment of their possibilities;

no matter what happens. Why bother with lesser things when we can shape our minds to their beauty and strength. St. Paul wrote to the Philipians: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK on THESE THINGS."

The next time you see a wild animal trainer at work with lions and tigers watch his methods and study the psychology he uses. He has studied them and their habits. He has mastered the methods by which he can protect himself from them. Therefore he is not afraid of them, for he knows he has mastered the situation. Some of them would like to tear him limb from limb, but they know better for they may have tried it and learned that the attempt didn't go well. He walks before them, looking them in the eye, and instead of attacking, they obey.

Try to learn to deal with life in that spirit of calm fearlessness. Learn how, then do what you have learned. Do it kindly, be considerate, but do not be afraid. When fear enters, ability to deal with the situation goes out.

The animal trainer is not the enemy of his cats. He is their friend, and remains so whether they act very friendly or not. Sometimes they do. The writer of this lesson saw a man petting a big tiger the other day, and the tiger was rubbing its head against him and purring like a house cat.

Here, then, is one of the great principles of attaining serenity in one's journey through life - make friends with your troubles and problems. Struggling against the water is no way to learn to swim. The person who keeps on doing it inevitably loses the fight and sinks. Cooperate with the water, and it will cooperate with you. It will bear you up while you paddle your way along. It is easier to float in water than it is to sink in it, if you make friends with it. The same is true of about everything in the world, and it is certainly true of life itself. Antagonize people, and the least they will do is to ignore you. Act friendly and be helpful, and they will open a way for you to pass to your goal. Fight against your environment, and it will ruin and perhaps destroy you. Cooperate with it, and it will work with you and for you. Resent and resist your troubles, and they will bar the way to serenity. Make friends with them, and they will help you on your way.

If you want a ship to ride on an even keel you must distribute the cargo so it will not be too heavy on one side or at one end. It is much the same with learning that poise which is a part of serenity. One cannot move calmly and steadily through the days if his interests, plans, actions and thoughts are not well balanced.

People talk much now about the well integrated life, that is the life which includes the elements and qualities a life should have, and has them in the right quantity and mixed together in the right proportions. If one over-emphasizes the intellectual, or the physical, or the social, at the expense of the other elements, he is getting his life out of balance. We may even say the same of the religious side of life, because religion does not express itself well in a one-sided life, and it must express itself in part through the other elements.

We see this in the formula St. Luke gives us for the growth of the boy Jesus into the Man. One of the few things we are told about the thirty years of

preparation that preceded His three years of public teaching is that He was advancing in wisdom, and in stature, and in favor with God and man. Here are the four elements; mind, body, religious life, and the social spirit, all growing together into a normal, healthy, well-integrated life, fit to be a human demonstration of the Divine.

In psychological laboratories dogs and other animals are placed in situations where they can see some reward, such as food, but something interferes with every attempt to reach it. They try and fail again and again, then they begin running wildly and aimlessly about, making confused noises, and sometimes those who have been subjected to much of this treatment suffer nervous breakdowns. These effects are signs of what is called the frustration neurosis.

Undoubtedly much wild and confused human behavior, which is the exact opposite of serenity, is of the same nature. There are countless frustrated people around us, people who have somehow failed to be adequate to the demands of life. Their conditions range all the way from confusion to breakdown, but none of them are serene or can be until and unless conditions are greatly changed.

The point is that one who attains serenity must avoid frustration, either by overcoming it, avoiding it, or disregarding it. But how may it be avoided? Simply by learning to be adequate to life. Decide what you want to do and be. Then decide how much of that you have a right to want to do and be. Then decide how much of that you can reasonably do and be or learn how to do and be. Then start realizing your aims. If you can do this you will avoid frustration neuroses and their devastating effect on serenity.

Desires may change as life goes on. The time may come when you will be thankful that you were denied some things you thought you wanted very much. Allow for this. Do not take it too hard when you fail to grasp something you reach for, remembering that it may prove to be much better so. You cannot afford to trade your peace of mind for something it would not really be good to have.

Meditate much on Jesus of Nazareth and others who found the way to live with calm and steady poise in the midst of earth's strife and turmoil. Try to find their secret and make it your own. You will admire the way in which they met things unperturbed, and you will realize how much more satisfying it is to live that way than to be blown all about by the winds of desire and envy.

We said in the preceding lesson that a good formula for acquiring faith is to live it until one has it, and then because he has it, he will live it. The same might be said of serenity. Acquiring it is mainly a matter of getting started and keeping on, and there is no better way to start than to put the method into operation and begin learning about it by experience. To theorize about such things may be enlightening, but the proof of the theories is in carrying them out, in putting them to the practical test. One never knows how much greater he can be than the storms that beat about him until he tries it. Then he discovers that only the fearful soul is in real danger, and that the people who have had most to fear have refused to be afraid.

A great name in the Book of Genesis is that of Enoch. Not much space is devoted to him, only enough to say one thing; but that one thing towers high in meaning and importance;—"and Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."

Here was a man who took the shortest and best road to serenity - to walk with God. That means to go the same direction as the fearless One, and to keep in step with Him. People who had observed the calm and majestic poise of such a life so envied its serenity that when he passed on to the next life they did not say that he had died, but that he seemed simply to have merged with the very life of God.

Most things we fear never happen, and most of those that do happen turn out to be not so bad as we feared they would be. So why be afraid? Why not look life in the face and go calmly on our way with that dauntless confidence called Serenity?

Meditate on this lecture; you will be richer the instant you make these Serene Truths part of your life. They will take you far up the path you are traveling. They will bind you closer to our beloved Mayanry. For it is our mutual love of wisdom and good Truth that made us Beloved Companions long ago.

Together, let us seek and find Ca-an within.

Your Class Instructor
in The Mayans.